

# Hoth: Under the Ice

## Planet Hoppers: December 2003

By [Cory Herndon](#)

Welcome to "Planet Hoppers," where each month, we bring you a set of articles on a particular world in the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* galaxy that a Gamemaster can use separately or as a linked series of events.

This month, we feature four tales of low-temperature survival on the treacherous ice world of Hoth. Be sure to check back each week for a new installment.



### Part 1: Snowflake Base

In which smugglers make the fatal mistake of thinking they've found the perfect hideout.

### Part 2: Steady, Girl

In which Alliance engineers arrive on Hoth and carve out the tunnels that will become Echo Base.

### Part 3: Merchants of Death

In which a pirate captain encounters the last Rebel hero on Hoth.

### Part 4: A Brief Thaw

In which Kyle Katarn and his apprentice investigate a Force disturbance at the deserted Echo base.

### **About the Author**

One-time *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* editor Cory J. Herndon is now a freelancer. Cory's work has appeared in *Amazing Stories*, *Duelist*, *TopDeck*, *Star Wars Gamer*, *Dragon*, and *SCIFI.com*. He has done additional design work on the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* revised core rulebook (primarily the Droids chapter), *The Dark Side Sourcebook* (creatures and archetypes), and the *Wheel of Time Roleplaying Game*. He is also the author of Volumes 5 and 6 of the **Magic: The Gathering Encyclopedia**. Cory's short story "Like Spider's Silk" appears in the *Secrets of Magic* Anthology. He asks that you please purchase a copy of it and the **D&D** novel *The Living Dead* for every room in your home. Cory is currently authoring original content for Xbox.com, writing the third book in an upcoming *Magic: The Gathering* novel trilogy, and continuing to design *Star Wars Roleplaying Game* material for the Wizards website.

# Part 1: Snowflake Base

Compiled by Cory J. Herndon

After the destruction of the first Death Star over Yavin, the Empire hunted the Rebel Alliance mercilessly. When Luke Skywalker stumbled upon the ice planet Hoth, Alliance leaders believed they'd found sanctuary. But the frozen planet at the end of the Corellian Trade Spine served only briefly as a haven. The Rebels suffered one of their most devastating post-Yavin defeats at the hand of the Empire's ground assault forces.

The Battle of Hoth has become both legendary and infamous largely because the Imperials documented the attack thoroughly for propaganda purposes. Few beings have been spared footage of Rebel corpses scattered on the ice, ground under the clanking feet of gigantic AT-ATs and blasted to pieces by heroic snowtrooper commandoes.

With the death of the Emperor at Endor, a different picture of Hoth began to emerge. General Carlist Rieekan's personal collection of historical data on Hoth has proven a treasure trove to New Republic historians. The Rebels already knew about a Mon Calamari smuggler named Salmakk who previously occupied the Echo Base area, but the Rieekan record makes mention of another smuggler, Jonox Forb. The fate of Forb's band is unknown, but his log was reportedly recovered from an abandoned wampa lair.



*NOTE: The following statistics depict Hoth without sentient inhabitants, which have never been able to establish a permanent presence. The native wampas display some intelligence and social development, but their sentience is in doubt among most respected scientists.*

**Planet:** Hoth

**Planet Type:** Terrestrial

**Climate:** Frozen

**Terrain:** Ice caves, frozen plains, mountain ranges

**Atmosphere:** Breathable

**Gravity:** Heavy (1.1 standard)

**Diameter:** 12,875 km

**Length of Day:** 23 standard hours

**Length of Year:** 549 local days

**Sentient Species:** None

**Language:** None

**Population:** 0 (sentient creatures)

**Species Mix:** Ice scrabblers 32%, tauntauns 23%, wampas 11%, other 34%

**Government:** None

**Major Exports:** None

**Major Imports:** None

**System/Star:** Hoth

**Region:** Outer Rim

Planets	Type	Moons
Shron	Volcanic	-
Biosh	Barren rock	-
Nushk	Methane oceans	4
Jhas	Gas giant	24
Ordaj	Gas giant	17
Hoth	Ice ball	3
Hoth Belt	Asteroid field	-

# Captain Jonox Forb's Personal Log

Recovered by Alliance Survey Team Theta

*Provided by the Rieekan Historical Collection. Reprinted with permission.*

And they said I was nuts. This place is perfect. Absolutely *perfect*. Better than I could have imagined, in fact. I just hope that when word gets out among the crew that we're not going to be making a profit from our current cargo they don't get any mutinous ideas. To that end, I'm planning to address my merry band of freelance cargo specialists tonight over the closed intership band, where I'll refute some misconceptions before we make planetfall.

The most common complaint I'm hearing is not about the temperature, but the damned asteroid field. Yes, it's dangerous. Yes, the proximity of that field means Hoth is pelted with more than its share of meteoroids. But this isn't a drawback -- it's imperative to the success of Snowflake Base. My pilots are no amateurs, and a skilled freighter pilot should have little trouble navigating the field, especially with an accurate, up-to-date map. A few nav beacons will make it a mine field for the authorities, whose unwieldy capital ships and starfighters will be chewed to bits.

And about the temperature -- so the speeders probably won't function. I say, so what? We're not a survey team. We're smugglers. The caves that'll house Snowflake Base are extensive, unoccupied according to our best scanning results, and completely interconnected. The speeders will be safe in storage. And we'll be safe under the ice between smuggling runs.

Yes, it's remote. That's the point. It's about as far outside the galaxy as you can get and still be within range of civilization. But it's also sitting right on top of the Corellian Trade Spine! We have a direct line to the Core itself. The Hydian Way is a short jump, and look at the proximity to Cloud City, home to some of the finest gambling houses (and wealthy smuggling clients) in the galaxy. What more do they want?

I plan to lead the initial landing party myself, first thing in the morning. If all goes as planned, Snowflake Base will be up and running within a month.

## Part 2: Steady, Girl

*Compiled by Cory J. Herndon*

Though the Alliance suffered a major defeat at the Battle of Hoth, the quick establishment of Echo Base was still a minor victory in and of itself. Unable to rely on their speeders in the bitter cold, the Alliance engineers sent ahead to prepare for the arrival of the main forces found alternate modes of transportation -- tauntauns. While tauntaun handlers like Corporal Corman Quien and Corporal Maer have since become well known, Corporal Vyn Rolado's log chronicles the first Rebel attempts at taming the beasts.

### Corporal Vyn Rolado's Personal Log

*Provided by the Rieekan Historical Collection. Reprinted with permission.*

The old smuggler that sold us the location of these caves said the creatures are called "tauntauns." He didn't know much else about them, except that they smelled terrible and that he'd heard tales of some of his fellow smugglers once taming the things and using them as mounts. We'd figured the tauntauns might make a good source of food, but now that we're having so much trouble with the speeders, I've been given the unenviable task of leading the Alliance's first tauntaun training unit. I just had to go and tell the lieutenant how much the damned things reminded me of the Ycaqts I used to ride back on Velmor, before my family moved to Corellia.

It took us a week to get close enough to a tauntaun pack to even think about capturing a few. Without speeders, we had to bait them out using wounded ice scrabblers, that little lichen-eating species that seems to be the only thing tauntauns eat. It wasn't pretty work, or particularly noble, but the sedative we'd injected into the scrabblers knocked out our new mounts quickly enough.

At first, the tauntauns simply screamed themselves hoarse all day. We had them penned up like banthas for the slaughter, and they didn't like it one bit. By this point, the main engineering team had excavated the main hangar, and more ships were moving in from the fleet. Already, the main computer stations were up and running, and the power generators had reached half capacity -- soon, the defense shield would be up, and the population of Echo Base would increase 1,000% overnight. There was no way the tauntauns would be ready in time.

I convinced the lieutenant to spare me an excavation rig and manned it myself to clear out a holding area for the tauntauns that gave them room to move, which calmed them down enough to attempt breaking one to the saddle. As it happened, I chose the alpha female for my first attempt and earned a concussion for my efforts. Clearly, breaking them to the saddle wasn't going to happen indoors.

For my second attempt, I had the alpha sedated and taken outside the hangar entrance (the heavy shield doors are in place, but not yet functioning; the hydraulics keep freezing up). She came out of sedation slowly and accepted food from my hand again. This time, she held still as I swung into the saddle and only barked a few times. Once I was in place, I gave her a light kick with my heels, and we were off. We ranged almost 35 kilometers according to my field odometer, and ended up racing nightfall back to the base.

Since that exhilarating ride, the pack's behavior immediately changed. I believe we've underestimated the intelligence of these creatures, as this could only have been a result of the alpha communicating to the others. And so the tauntauns and our people have settled into an alliance of our own. The tauntauns will share "their" caves with us, as long as we join them for a daily run over the plains.



## GM Notes: Tauntaun Alpha Female

Despite their thick layers of fur and insulating fat, tauntauns are technically reptiles, like their ice scabbler prey. Several species inhabit Hoth, though only the ice field subspecies saw extensive use as mounts by the Rebels.

Tauntauns in the wild live in a matriarchal pack structure. The alpha is usually the strongest female in the pack (and therefore the oldest), and has so much influence over her fellow tauntauns that she can cause them all to alter their behavior overnight.

### Species Traits

*Survival:* Because tauntauns evolved on the bitter ice world of Hoth, they gain a +4 bonus to Survival checks in any frozen environment.

*Pack leader:* The pack will follow the will of the alpha in most situations, unless survival instincts overwhelm the alpha's influence. If a character makes a successful Handle Animal check involving the alpha, Handle Animal checks involving the same task with other individual pack members automatically succeed for the same character.

**Tauntaun Alpha:** Large female arctic herd animal 5; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Defense 19 (+1 Dex, -1 size, +9 natural), touch 18, flat-footed 18; Spd 22 m, climb 10 m; VP/WP 32/18; Atk +6 melee (1d4+5, claw) or Atk +6 melee (1d6+5, bite) or +2 ranged; SQ Species traits; SV Fort +8, Ref +2, Will +1; Face/Reach 2 m by 4 m/2 m; FP 0; DSP 0; Rep +0; Str 20, Dex 13, Con 18, Int 4, Wis 14, Cha 8. Challenge Code C.

*Skills:* Listen +6, Spot +6, Survival +9.

*Feats:* Improved Initiative, Skill Emphasis (Survival).

## Part 3: Merchants of Death

*Compiled by Cory J. Herndon*

Rebel pilots, especially those who have served personally with the legendary Wedge Antilles, have heard every variation imaginable on the following tale. Antilles and his snowspeeder co-pilot Wes Janson had crashed during the battle and been unable to reach their ships before the Imperials laid waste to Echo Base. The pair survived for several months before a rescue team led by Luke Skywalker found them in a stolen pirate freighter, running low in oxygen and supplies. In some versions of the story -- especially the one related to green starfighter cadets -- Antilles claims Janson didn't survive, just to see the reaction of trainees when they meet Janson later in their piloting education.



Infamous as Wedge's yarn is among Rebel pilots, many, including Skywalker himself, took most of it with a grain of salt. It wasn't until the salvaged pirate freighter was thoroughly refitted for Alliance use that the following records came to light, providing another perspective on the incident.

### Expedition Log, the Death Merchant

#### Captain Arns Grimraker Recording

Initial surveys of Hoth system proven correct. A great battle was fought here between the Rebels and Imperial forces, and as usual no one bothered to clean up the mess. That means profit, provided we can move quickly. I don't kid myself into thinking that other salvage crews aren't already on their way here. Our hideout in the asteroid field gave us first crack at the spoils, but it won't last forever.

We all must remain on guard. The salvage operation is almost too easy, and we may not be alone here. A few pieces of unexploded ordnance are to be expected on any battlefield, but the losses we've taken in the last few days are starting to look coordinated, as if some unseen force is taking potshots at us. I've sent scouting crews to check out the main base. There's nothing of much use left in there to us, but a few Rebel holdouts could still be in hiding.

Still, the loot we're getting from the field more than makes up for a few losses, so I've decided to leave the Rebels -- if that's what they are -- alone until we're loaded up. We've already got enough salvage to assemble two complete AT-AT walkers, to say nothing of the speeder parts and heavy weaponry abandoned after the Rebels pulled out. There's even a fully intact AT-ST transport loader the Imperials must've forgotten about. But before we launch, I plan to flatten the old base, just to show the Rebel holdouts what messing with Arns Grimraker will get you.

## GM Notes: Arns Grimraker

The cyborg pirate Arns Grimraker was, for a short time, an accomplished arms merchant dealing exclusively in scavenged equipment. His origins murky and his methods brutal, Grimraker led a highly successful (and wholly illegal) scavenging business that relied on space tugs and a single huge freighter, the *Death Merchant*, that could move undetected with great speed from battlefield to battlefield, always arriving before the competition.

Grimraker's left arm and the left side of his face were replaced with cybernetic enhancements. His mechanical limb ends in a powerful grasping claw, and his artificial eye can focus independently on thousands of different wavelengths. In short, Arns Grimraker can spot a salvageable power core at 30 kilometers without batting an eye.

Grimraker's operations -- and his life -- were forcibly ended by the efforts of Wedge Antilles. The most successful period of his career was between the destruction of the Death Star and his death on Hoth, when the Empire was in hot pursuit of Rebel groups across the galaxy.

**Arns Grimraker:** Male Human Cyborg Scoundrel 8/Noble 2/Crime Lord 5; Init +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Defense 21 (+2 Dex, +9 class); Spd 10 m; VP/WP 115/21; Atk +18/+13 melee (1d6+9, unarmed strike) or +11/+6 ranged (3d8+4, augmented heavy blaster pistol); SQ Bonus class skill (Gather Information), favor +1, contact (Durga the Hutt), contact (unknown Imperial officer), cybernetic enhancements, darkvision, DR 1, minions, illicit barter, inspire confidence, inspire fear -2, lucky (2/day), precise attack +2, resource access; SV Fort +7, Ref +13, Will +10; SZ M; FP 1; DSP 37; Rep +10; Str 20, Dex 15, Con 18, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 16. Challenge Code E.

**Equipment:** Augmented heavy blaster pistol (damage +4), heavy freighter (the *Death Merchant*), scavenger fleet, personal wealth, scavenged equipment stores (value unknown).

**Skills:** Appraise +22, Bluff +18, Computer Use +15, Demolitions +6, Diplomacy +13, Disable Device +9, Forgery +15, Gather Information +11, Intimidate +28, Knowledge (technology) +18, Pilot +6, Profession (merchant) +17, Read/Write Basic, Repair +11, Search +15, Sense Motive +9, Speak Basic, Speak Verpine, Spot +12.

**Feats:** Frightful Presence, Gearhead, Improved Initiative, Infamy, Sharp-Eyed, Skill Emphasis (Appraise), Skill Emphasis (Intimidate), Skill Emphasis (Profession [merchant]), Starship Operation (space transports), Toughness, Weapon Group Proficiency (blaster pistols, simple weapons).

**Special Qualities:** Cybernetic enhancements -- Grimraker's mechanical parts give him augmented visual acuity, constitution, and strength. He receives a +6 circumstance bonus to Knowledge (technology), Spot, and Search checks in addition to his increased ability scores and vision modes, along with a +4 circumstance bonus to Intimidate checks. In unarmed melee, he receives a +4 circumstance bonus to attack and damage rolls. Though imposing, Grimraker's armored mechanical parts provide a damage reduction of only 1.

### Hoth Stuff, Comin' Through!

One of the most infamous issues of the Marvel *Star Wars* comic book series and the only one to focus heavily on Wedge Antilles, #78 depicted a grizzled, bearded Wedge with a decidedly noncanonical origin (seemingly borrowed from Biggs Darklighter) and a doozy of a story to tell his rescuers. Despite the oddities -- including the first appearance of a Kenner mini-vehicle in the series, strangely spacious Y-Wings (last seen in #49, "The Last Jedi!"), and the premature reports of Wes Janson's death -- David Micheline's script makes the story worth reading, especially if you picture Wedge embellishing the tale over a mug of lum with his fellow pilots. Artists Bob Layton and Luke McDonnell also created several memorable unnamed and "nontraditional" alien species for this issue, in addition to the creepy-as-hell Arns Grimraker. Look for Marvel's *Star Wars* #78, "Hoth Stuff," at your local comic shop, or look for the reprint in *Fool's Bounty*, volume 5 of Dark Horse's *A Long Time Ago* . . . series of Marvel collections.





## Part 4: A Brief Thaw

*Compiled by Cory J. Herndon*

Our final installment does not come from Carlist Rieekan's personal collection of records and data but was donated to the New Republic Historical Archive by Master Skywalker himself. The transcribed recording was sent to Skywalker at the Academy on Yavin 4 not long after Jedi Master Kyle Katarn and his apprentice arrived on Hoth searching for the source of a Force disturbance.

### Encrypted Data Transmission

**File Code: Tauntaun Feathers A1**

*Kyle Katarn transmitting*

You were right, Skywalker. There's something here. It hit me like a bantha stampede the minute we dropped out of hyperspace at the edge of the system. And I don't mean the asteroid field, though that was no picnic with only minimal nav guidance.

We set down at the coordinates you described, but I tell you there's nothing there -- nothing at all. And definitely no Force disturbance. I decided, and my apprentice agreed, that we should move on to Echo Base, where it seemed the disturbance was focused. But the *Claw's* systems had frozen up, so we had to corral a tauntaun and hitch a ride. We were lucky; anyone without a connection to the Force probably would have been stuck for good.

We soon picked up an Imperial transmission signal that I took, at first, to be an old relay beacon. But it turns out the Imperial Remnant is here in force, using the wreckage of the battlefield to hide a tunnel into Echo Base. The old entrances have caved in, but we found a way in through a downed AT-AT. The Imps actually dug a tunnel *underneath* the blasted hulk into the old tunnels. Whatever they're up to, they don't trust Hoth itself to keep them hidden. And that worries me.



**A downed walker, from the Jedi Knights: Jedi Academy game.**

We encountered mild Imperial resistance -- nothing we couldn't handle -- along with rogue wampas (have I mentioned how much I hate wampas, trompas, and all the rest of that ilk?). But the source of the disturbance lay deeper within the complex, in the old command center.

Now you and I have both heard Wedge's tale of survival after the Battle of Hoth, and how he rigged the generators in the old base to keep him and Janson alive, right? Obviously, he had no choice, but that decision may come back to haunt you, me, and all the Jedi. See, the command center computer core was supposed to



have been trashed when the Alliance pulled out, but Wedge's jury-rigging must have left some of the core memory exposed. There were *Sith* in there, Luke, or at least some amateurs that claimed to be. And they were hunting for the planet that you went to after Hoth.

They were looking for the planet that you trained on. They were looking for Dagobah, and somewhere in the computer core, I think they found it.

Watch your back, and consider sending a team to Dagobah. We'll be back for a personal debrief in a few days.

## GM Notes: The Echoes of Hoth

Using the information provided here and the new LucasArts game [Star Wars: Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy](#), you can build your own adventure on New Republic-era Hoth. The Imperials, wampas, and "Sith cult" members inhabiting the abandoned Rebel base make it an excellent adventure setting for your own campaign. We've compiled a few suggested encounters to get you started, but be sure to play *Jedi Academy* to fill in the details.



### The Secret Entrance

The entrance to Echo Base has been buried by the forces of nature, and the old Rebel hideout is completely inaccessible -- unless the heroes can locate the secret entrance blasted into the ice by the Imperials. Finding the correct crashed AT-AT takes a successful DC 12 Search check and 2d4 hours. Once the correct wreck is located, the entrance is fairly apparent, but it still must be cut or blasted open. The heroes can expect to encounter stormtroopers and automated blasters.

### The Tunnel

The Imperials have dug into the ice to gain access to Echo Base, and the passageway is fraught with dangers. Heavy chunks of ice might drop from the ceiling without warning, and the tunnel itself allows only two medium-sized beings to move abreast down its length. The ceiling is between 8 and 10 feet high. Aside from falling ice, heroes might be attacked by ice scrabblers (see the [Ultimate Alien Anthology](#)), more Imperials, and even a roving wampa or two.

### Echo Base

Power has been restored to some of the base, surprisingly enough. The heroes may wish to slice into the computer system to learn more about the situation before proceeding. Balance the computer's security system to the skill level of the heroes. They might also find weapons stores in the old Rebel armory, though such items will likely require charging.



The ruined command center of Echo Base, from the Jedi Knights: Jedi Academy game.